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First Lady gowns subject of next history book club meeting

PIERRE, S.D. -- The First Lady Inaugural Gown display is a popular stop for people visiting the South Dakota State Capitol.

People can learn more about the display and gowns during the History and Heritage Book Club meeting on Tuesday, April 5. The program will take place from noon-1 p.m. CDT on the first floor of the Capitol by the First Lady Inaugural Gown display. It is free and open to the public.

"There is a history behind every woman and dress featured in the display, and we want to share that history," said Patricia Miller, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society.

During the program, people can learn more about the book club selection of the month, *First Lady Inaugural Gowns*. This is a chapbook recently published by the SDSHS Press. The Press and Foundation sponsor the History and Heritage Book Club. A chapbook is a small book, so called because it was originally sold by chapmen, or British traveling peddlers. The booklet contains photos of the replica gowns and a biography and photograph of each first lady from South Dakota's first first lady, Margaret Mellette, to the current first lady, Linda Daugard.

Comments from some of South Dakota's first ladies about the gown or dress they wore to their husbands' inaugurations will be shared during the program.

Miller is herself a former first lady of South Dakota. The dress she wore to her wedding to Walter Dale Miller and photographs of some of the inaugurations will be displayed.

"By having the program in the Capitol, people can see photographs of the first ladies and reproductions of their gowns in the First Lady Inaugural Gown display in the building that was the site of many inaugurals," Miller said.

The First Lady Inaugural Gown display has been part of the Capitol since the 1960s. The idea for the project came from Eleanor Caldwell of Sioux Falls after she saw a similar display in Colorado in 1959. The exhibit was updated by the South Dakota Federation of Republican Women under the leadership of Pat Adam, Pat Harding, Carla Sahr and Rhonda Larson, who all lived in Pierre. The display was rededicated on Feb. 24, 1989, and contains gowns from all the first ladies through Jean Rounds, whose husband Mike served as governor from 2003-2010.

Because the program takes place over the noon hour, people are welcome to bring their lunch.

First Lady Inaugural Gowns is available at the Heritage Stores at the Capitol and at the Cultural Heritage Center.

For more information about the History and Heritage Book Club, please call (605) 773-6006.

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The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.